DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 491 CS 014 383

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TITLE	Reading Instruction and the Kindergarten Student.
PUB DATE	2001-06-20
NOTE	8p.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Classroom Environment; Classroom Techniques; *Kindergarten; *Kindergarten Children; *Learning Readiness; Primary Education; *Reading Achievement; *Reading Instruction; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	Learning Environment

ABSTRACT

Kindergarten stresses the readiness factor for learning. This paper first lists 10 things which kindergarten students have experienced in developing readiness for first grade. The paper then discusses 10 things that teachers can do to approach teaching reading in the kindergarten classroom. Finally, it considers additional assistance to aid kindergarten reading achievement and suggests that "ambitious" goals which are unrealistic need to be avoided in teaching reading. The paper concludes that liking and loving reading are salient factors in guiding optimal reading achievement. (NKA)

ED 455 491

Reading Instruction and the Kindergarten Student.

by Marlow Ediger

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READING INSTRUCTION AND THE KINDERGARTEN STUDENT

With state mandated tests and high stakes testing, there is a temptation to push more complicated subject matter and skills to lower grade levels. The kindergarten level is no exception. Kindergarten has stressed two basic philosophies, although there certainly can be in between points of view also. Kindergarten has stressed the readiness factor for learning. Thus, kindergarten students have experienced the following, as examples, in developing readiness for first grade:

1. story reading in which the teacher reads aloud stimulating stories to these young children.
2. clay and play dough modeling whereby student may, for example, make models pertaining to what has been read during story time.
3. creative dramatics which involves students in role playing activities pertaining to reading an illustrated book.
4. drawing and coloring that which has been viewed in the natural environment.
5. taking and discussing short excursions in school, on the school grounds, and in the adjacent surrounding environment.
6. introductory counting experiences including students indicating how may will be eating lunch in the school cafeteria.
7. using toy money in a classroom supermarket to buy goods and services.
8. observing scientific phenomenon which includes leaves on trees changing color in fall.
9. planting seeds in glass/paper containers to notice growth on a daily basis.
10. developing experience charts pertaining to items on an interest center (Ediger, no date given, 2-18) .

The above named learning opportunities are still very excellent for young learners.Then too, much is written about kindergarten students being able to tackle more challenging learning experiences (Ediger and Rao, 2000, Chapter Two).

Teaching Reading In Kindergarten

The kindergarten teacher needs to study students in his/her classroom to notice where each learner is presently in reading achievement. From that point on, the teacher may provide sequential experiences for students in reading instruction. Sequential learning opportunities for kindergarten students in reading may, first of all, emphasize viewing of illustrations and discussing each. CD ROMS may provide a good source of illustrations here, as well as children's

magazines, encyclopedias, and weekly news periodicals. The illustrations may deal with many topics for young children such as animals, boys and girls, toys, games, pets, trees, fruits,and vegetables, among others. Students with teacher leadership may brain storm what is in each sequential picture. Learners may also tell a story dealing with an illustration. Thus, students may expand their listening and speaking vocabularies. Vocabulary development is vital in becoming a good reader. Rich experiences should be the lot of each kindergarten student when using illustrations as a teaching device for reading instruction. All should be actively engaged in listening and speaking activities when ongoing learning activities are in evidence. Learning Styles Theory needs to be emphasized in teaching and learning situations (See Martin and Potter, 1998).

Second, to stress more of reading abstract words, the teacher may place labels on selected objects in the classroom. A sign printed "table" may appear on a table. The attention of students may be secured to look carefully at the word "table." Students need to be stimulated to look at a sign carefully so that actual reading may accrue. As students are ready, additional neatly printed labels in manuscript style may be placed on classroom items. The teacher may, at times, take a label off the object in the classroom and ask learners to pronounce the needed word.

Third, objects may be placed on an interest center. These objects may include a toy car, a top, a whistle, a small drum, as well as a bat and ball. After discussing the objects on the interest center, students may provide sentences as to what was observed. Each sentence is printed on the chalkboard in neat manuscript letters, large enough for all to see clearly. For variation, the teacher may type in needed commands and use the word processor to show what students have provided in terms of sentences. The teacher may read aloud each sentence as given by learners and then have students join the teacher in orally reading the sentences. The kindergarten teacher may point to each word as it is read aloud so that learners may learn to recognize basic sight words. There are selected words which kindergartners meet up with again and again; these are then identified in reading content and provide a foundation for sight word development and building. The contents may be read together as often as desired. In fact, practice in what children have composed makes for meaningful learning. The completed sheets may be saved and reread.

Fourth, A Big Book approach may be used. The Big Book is generally commercially published and contains a large enough print size for all students to see clearly, be it a small group or the class as a whole. The kindergarten teacher reads the content aloud as he/she points to each word. Students may see each word as it is being read orally by the teacher. Next, the teacher and students collectively read the subject matter. The teacher still points to each word read aloud in

context, not as isolated words. Learners may wish to reread the selection over again as often as interest is strong. No child is pressured to do the impossible. There should be no failures as the rereading occurs.

Fifth, appropriate library books should be read aloud by the teacher to children. These books need to capture student interest and meaning. Kindergarten teachers need to read aloud with enthusiasm and have children see the illustrations in the book as the contents are being read. The read aloud voice needs to be well modulated with proper stress, pitch, and juncture. Eye contact with students assists in drawing learner attention to the reading activity. The rate of reading speed should harmonize with what students can readily understand.

Sixth, library books should be readily available for kindergartners. The books may be largely pictorial in nature and contain abstract words to go along with the illustrations. The complexity of words used should be written for young children and also provide for individual differences. The teacher may briefly discuss with a child what has been read or noticed from the chosen library book.

Seventh, poems read to children provide excellent opportunities for introductory fun exercises in phonics. Thus if rhymed words occur, pupils may study these words once the concept of "rhyme " is understood and learners begin to hear sound elements. Couplets, triplets, quatrains, and limericks give kindergartners a chance to identify words which have rhyme. Alliteration emphasizes two or more words sequentially which possess the same beginning sound such as in, "Careful cat comes to eat." Students will indicate readiness for phonics experiences. Those who cannot her likenesses and differences in kindergarten should never be minimized, but later on with increased maturity will be ready for selected phonics activities. Children are ready for different kinds of reading experiences at diverse age levels. Each kindergartner needs to be accepted in terms of present reading achievement levels and then be guided to learn as much as possible in learning to read optimally. No child should be allowed to fall through the cracks with little to show in reading achievement.

Eighth, time should be given in class for students to share ideas pertaining to what has been read. Thus, learners have opportunities to reveal comprehension and interest in reading. Sharing of ideas provide children chances to hear content from others which might whet appetites for wanting read the same library book. After listening to key ideas from a story, the learner is then increasingly ready to comprehend subject matter he/she may read from the same library book. Creative and formal dramatizations, as well as puppetry, may be used by students to share ideas (Ediger, 1989, 113-114).

Ninth, learning centers may be developed by the teacher with thematic library books at each center. One theme for a center may be

"Zoo Animals." The child may then choose a library book to read and reveal what has been learned in a self selected ways. An illustration may be drawn to show a concept or generalization in the story (See Gardner, 1993). The developmental level of the child must always be considered in any assessment procedure used.

Tenth, students should have learning opportunities in reading whereby a quality cassette recording can be listened to as the reader follows along in the chosen library book. The recording than assists the learner to read words which otherwise could not be identified. Peers may also read to each other. A good reader then may have opportunities to reread a book aloud as well as assist a child to enjoy story content. An old fashioned approach is to have a kindergartner who reads well help those who have difficulties in word recognition by pronouncing the unidentified word. In this way a less proficient reader is not held back when reading story content but has the word identified almost immediately. Very little interruption then occurs in sequential reading of ideas (Ediger, 1984, 231-244).

Additional Assistance to Aid Kindergarten Reading Achievement

It is always important for teachers and school administrators to be on the lookout for ways to help students become better readers. Quality aid service may be a good way to assist kindergarten teachers in teaching students to read. Aids need inservice training and realize they are working under the auspices of the licensed, certified teacher. They need to be caring and polite in working with children and accept each in terms of his/her present achievement level. How might these aids assist kindergartners in reading (Ediger, 2001, p. 12)?

* reading aloud orally to a set of students. Proper techniques need to be used in the oral reading experience. This activity should help students to like reading as a way of learning and as a practical and recreational experience.
* assisting students with word identification within an ongoing reading experience.
* telling stories to children in an orderly, sequential way.
* helping to manage students to select appropriate library books in an orderly way.
* guiding students with worthwhile seat work activities.
* supervising children while the kindergarten teacher is working with a given set of students on specific reading problems (Ediger, 2001, 61-64).

The use of basal reading text materials needs to be addressed for kindergarten children. Basals like all reading materials should possess the following guidelines:

1. be meaningful. Thus, students may attach meaning to what is being read with adequate readiness experiences.

2. be sequential in being based on what was achieved previously in reading.

3. be of interest to students. The teacher needs to develop and/or maintain learner interest in reading.

4. be purposeful in that learners perceive reasons for learning to increase and extend reading abilities.

5. be developmental whereby the kindergartner experiences continuous progress. Failure must be eliminated wherever humanly possible.

6. be diagnostic and remedial in ascertaining any weaknesses in student reading activities.

7. be goal centered in that relevant, vital objectives in reading are being achieved.

8. be enjoyable as well as utilitarian in student reading achievement.

9. be useful in having students attain knowledge, skills, and attitudinal objectives in reading.

10. be used to help students reinforce previously developed reading skills.

Conclusion

Kindergarten children will vary from each other in reading abilities and achievement. All cannot be held to achieving the same standards in reading instruction. Each can make continuous progress from initial beginnings. Kindergarten children need to be successful in reading so that positive attitudes are developed toward word recognition techniques and comprehension of content. "Ambitious" goals which are unrealistic need to be avoided in teaching reading. Liking and loving reading are salient factors in guiding optimal reading achievement.

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